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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5637
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6734
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3410
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4895
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2500
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3780
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001172

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL CABINET PROMOTES TORAN SINGH, DRAWS CRITICISM

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1112

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1078

[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 0982

[1](#)D. KATHMANDU 0929

[1](#)E. KATHMANDU 0906

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Randy W. Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 8.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Brushing aside the concerns of the international community and Nepal's own human rights groups, the Cabinet approved the promotion of Toran Singh to Chief of the General Staff on December 24, making Singh the second highest ranking officer in the Nepal Army. Post and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) criticized the decision. We have repeatedly warned Nepal's senior leadership that the promotion of Singh could impact U.S. military assistance (reftels). Post recommends that the Department consult with the Department of Defense to coordinate a U.S. Government response that would underscore our strong human rights concerns while preserving key aspects of our military cooperation with the Nepal Army. END SUMMARY.

After Long Delay, Singh Promoted

[1](#)3. (C) On December 24, Nepal's Cabinet approved the promotion of Toran Jung Bahadur Singh as Chief of the General Staff, the second-in-command of the Nepal Army. PM Nepal had delayed Singh's promotion for six months because of concerns about Singh's human rights record. Singh was the commander of the 10th Brigade when one of his subordinate battalions, the Bhairabnath Battalion, allegedly detained, tortured, and "disappeared" 49 suspected Maoists in 2003. No one has been held accountable for this incident, one of the high-profile emblematic cases identified by OHCHR and human rights groups. The Government of Nepal says it conducted an internal inquiry into Singh's role in the human rights abuses (ref B). The inquiry -- which has not been made public -- reportedly found that Singh was not directly responsible for the human rights abuses, but did not assign blame to anyone else.

Criticism of Promotion

[1](#)4. (U) Following the cabinet decision, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a press release expressing concern about the promotion of Singh. OHCHR head

Richard Bennett said that Singh should not be promoted until the Nepal Government completes a "full, transparent and impartial investigation" of human rights charges. Such an investigation would "enhance, not diminish, the prestige of the Nepal Army at home and abroad," Bennett said. Several organizations, including Advocacy Forum, the Nepal Bar Association, and the International Commission of Jurists, also opposed Singh's promotion.

15. (U) Embassy spokesperson publicly said on December 24 that the promotion of Toran Singh "could have an impact on the U.S. assistance to the Nepal Army." The spokesperson added: "We have repeatedly expressed our concern about the promotion to the Nepali government. We also want to stress that our concern is not about one individual, rather all the human rights abuses that were committed by the Maoists and the Nepal Army during the decade-long conflict. These abuses need to be thoroughly investigated and those abusers held accountable. This is what the people of Nepal, especially the victims and their families, deserve."

Comment and Action Request

16. (C) PM M.K. Nepal was under tremendous pressure from conservatives -- and likely from New Delhi -- to promote Singh. PM Nepal's ultimate acquiescence demonstrates that the Army elite's self-interest continues to trump long-term human rights goals. Besides the negative signal about the GON's commitment to human rights, the Singh promotion also means that General Gaurav Shumsher Rana will likely become

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the next head of the Army. Rana, who is from one of Nepal's traditional elite families, is viewed as a protector of the military, close to India (his wife is Indian), and is more likely to resist the "democratization" of the military, including integration of Maoist combatants.

17. (C) Post recommends that the Department consult with DOD on the appropriate response to Singh's promotion. We have repeatedly warned that the promotion could impact U.S. military cooperation, so believe that some formal response is necessary to reaffirm the importance of human rights and ending Nepal's culture of impunity.
BERRY